

King County Office of Emergency Management Podcasts

Disasters: Are you ready?

Breaking Records

Everyone loves records. We keep track of our best golf score (I broke 40 once for nine holes), bowling scores (I think 125 was a personal best, but then I don't know how to keep score in bowling).

And, this past summer Destination Harley Davidson in Fife had their VROD motorcycle set the best land speed record for a stock bike of its type.

Hurricane Katrina was a record setting disaster in the nation's history both in size, scope and media coverage.

The last month has also been "one for the record books here in the Northwest. As noted in an earlier Eric's Corner we set an all time record for rainfall in a single month (that was November), the Snoqualmie River had record flows because of the rainfall. Just this past Thursday Seattle set a personal best for rainfall in a single day with a deluge exceeding 2 inches hitting the city right around the start of the Seahawks – 49ers football game.

And, now we have had the all time worst windstorm and damages to our electrical distribution system in King County. Puget Sound Energy reported in excess of 700,000 customers without power, and the majority of them being in King County. As I write this three days after the storm has passed there are still almost 200K customers without power in King County—and it has been relatively cold here.

And, let me clarify customers. The media reported in excess of one million people without power at the height of the electrical outage. Which was wrong. The one million figure was customers of all the electrical utilities combined, which in electrical speak means "electric meters." So, I don't know the exact measurement to use, but let's say meters translates into 2.5 people per household or addresses. That's a whole lotta folks without power and way more than what the media reported.

I'm thinking, "What's next?" Is it a record snow storm, more record rainfall that will certainly lead to record landslides? How about a "record earthquake" or record tsunami in the Northwest? Since we have only been keeping score out here for a little more than a hundred years we are sure to beat our "personal and regional best" in the future.

Given that, now is the time to become prepared for disasters as an individual, as a family, neighborhood, business, community and region. Don't put off today what you think you can do tomorrow. Just talk to the people who could have "mitigated" their situation by buying gasoline for their cars and generators the day before the "predicted" windstorm hit.

Preparedness can save, time, money and even lives. So, give the gift of preparedness this holiday season and stuff someone's stocking with emergency supplies or an entire kit for their home, office or car.

Finally, I wish you all a happy holiday season that you can celebrate safely with family and friends. And, please—no more record breaking disaster events for at least a little while.